

MARSH VEGETATION COMMUNITY



There are two types of Marsh lands in San Diego County; Freshwater Marsh and Coastal Salt Marsh. Both of these communities are very important for wildlife, and both have had extensive reductions due to channelization, dredging and vegetation removal. Both communities have been *reduced in area by 85-90 percent of their original area* to less than 1,000 acres total.

Coastal Salt Marsh is found within the tidal zone on the edge of lagoons and bays. The major locations of this community are the Tijuana Estuary, Penasquitos Lagoon and the mouth of the Santa Margarita River. Dominant plants in Coastal Salt Marsh are Glasswort (*Salicornia*), Alkali heath (*Frankenia*), Salt grass and Cordgrass. Two notable endangered birds occur within this community, the Light footed clapper rail and the Belding's savannah sparrow. However, the Marsh lands are also important for shorebirds and the naturally occurring flow channels within Coastal Salt Marsh are important spawning areas for a number of fish species.

Freshwater Marsh land is found along stream courses and near Riparian wetland areas. It was originally found near natural springs and ponded areas within the major stream channels. It has been affected by channelization and clearing of vegetation within stream channels. Dominant plants within Freshwater Marsh include rushes, cattails, bulrushes (or tules) and several species of small willows. There is often open water in depressions or natural springs. Freshwater Marsh is home to a number of species of birds including the Yellowthroat, a species of Warbler, several species of small herons as well as rails. Freshwater Marsh in its natural state has also served as habitat for native frog species, several of which are now endangered. The introduction of bullfrogs from eastern North America has had a severe *detrimental effect* on the native amphibian populations due to its voracious appetite and large size.

Freshwater Marsh is found in small isolated areas along the major stream courses: San Diego, San Dieguito, San Luis Rey, and Santa Margarita as well as the upper ends of the major lagoons.



Courtesy of the County of San Diego
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